

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
January 18, 2007  
The University of Montana - Helena College of Technology

The January 18, 2007 meeting of the Montana Board of Education was called to order by Governor Brian Schweitzer.

ROLL CALL

Members present were: Regents Steve Barrett, Lynn Morrison-Hamilton, Heather O'Loughlin, Janine Pease, Mark Semmens, Lila Taylor, Clay Christian and Board of Public Education members Cal Gilbert, Patty Myers, Storrs Bishop, Angela McLean, John Fuller, and Jenny Tiskus. Ex-officio members present were Governor Schweitzer, Superintendent McCulloch and Commissioner Stearns. BPE member Kirk Miller was excused.

The minutes of the July 13, 2006 meeting were approved as read.

Governor Schweitzer opened the meeting with remarks about Montana education being for life and in order for Montana to be competitive around the world we have to create and maintain an education system second to none. We need to develop an education pipeline system that delivers graduates with the skills we will need 20 years from now. The best indicator of what the future will look like is to look at trends from the past. The challenge is to predict what those jobs will be which is why we need a broad spectrum of stakeholders at the table. Mistakes made today will manifest 20 years from now.

Education attracts the kind of industries that pay more money. We don't know exactly what jobs we will have 20 years from now, but we do have a good idea what we will have 5 years from now. We need to continue to modify programs based on emerging jobs. Our colleges of technology have to be at the forefront to create the kind of graduates that we need. The universities' education mission is to make people not only prepared for jobs but that are ready to be good citizens.

Governor Schweitzer stressed how important full-time kindergarten is. Previously he thought that the state should focus on 2 year higher education programs. While he still thinks this is vital to Montana, Linda McCulloch continued to describe how important full time kindergarten is for Montana. Since then he has heard from educators around the world about the importance of full-time kindergarten. A large part of Montana has also accepted that the time has come for full-time kindergarten.

Governor Schweitzer turned the meeting over to Jan Lombardi to facilitate a discussion on full-time kindergarten.

Ms. Lombardi introduced Billie Warford who was filling in for Anna Lovejoy of the National Governor's Association. Ms. Warford stated that early childhood education had been missing from education discussions and was delighted that the Montana education community was pursuing full-time kindergarten. Learning begins at conception and continues throughout a

person's lifetime. People need to broaden their vision and think about how important each of us are in creating a vision for education in Montana from the beginning.

Montana is ready for full-time kindergarten now for a number of reasons. The Governor and State Superintendent are committed to full-time kindergarten and have brought together groups to discuss the issues. School readiness teams have been meeting and working with Head Start which is a major player in preschool services in the state. DPHHS has been working with schools to create early learning guidelines to define what 3, 4 and 5 year old children should know and be able to do. Full-time kindergarten is a very important piece of early childhood education which is defined as birth through age 8. Research supports full-time kindergarten and has established that the programs work. Full-time kindergarten eases the transition to first grade, contributes to higher academic achievement, improves literacy, increases social and emotional development. Full-time kindergarten also decreases long term costs of education with lower retention rates and reduced costs for remediation.

To determine if the benefits are worth the cost, Ms. Warford suggested that we ask the school districts that already have full-time kindergarten programs. Full-time kindergarten programs should be voluntary at the local level. The state needs to support those that are ready. The districts need to calculate the costs and benefits. The teachers in the classrooms need to be knowledgeable about early child development. The university system needs to promote early childhood licensure and qualifications. Policy makers need to standardize policies and expectations and commit the resources.

Montana has a large number of parents working more than one job. Many people are living just above the poverty line. The result is that a lot of kids are spending long hours out of the home. Montana needs to network all the support services and be realistic in the things we can do.

Regent Pease asked how many districts currently have full-time kindergarten. Superintendent McCulloch responded that 63 school districts offer full-time kindergarten to about 28% of the kindergartners in the state. Many of the schools offer full-time kindergarten to all of its students. Great Falls is one example.

Regent O'Loughlin asked how educator training was being handled. Superintendent McCulloch responded that different districts were doing different things. Some teachers go to conferences on full-time kindergarten. A majority of the teachers have been studying and are ready to go. At the state level, trainings will be offered around the state.

Commissioner Stearns pointed out that there are also private full-time kindergartens, but they are expensive and income dependent. She stated that she encouraged and endorsed the effort to have full-time kindergarten in all districts. She commented that it would be wonderful if every parent could stay home and prepare their children for first grade, but that's not our world.

Governor Schweitzer asked for public comment and there was none.

Governor Schweitzer summarized by stating that full-time kindergarten contributes to higher academic achievement, increases graduation rates, increases success rates in college, increases

wages in the workplace and decreases expenditures in corrections. An economist found that investment in full-time kindergarten pays 16% compounded from the time we're educating students. He stated that he hoped the rest of Montana could be brought on board. He acknowledged that two bills have passed the Senate - SB 123 and SB 152 - both include full-time kindergarten.

Jan Lombardi stated that the Board of Education had disbanded the committees they formerly had and created a kindergarten to college (K-C) work group. Erin Williams, a parent representative, is the chair and Regent Pease is the vice chair of the work group.

Ms. Williams is a professional counselor and works as an advocate for children that are having difficult starts in life. She stated that the purpose of the work group was to assist the Board of Education with planning and coordination to build a strong education system in Montana. The work group meets four times a year to assist the Board of Education in meeting deliverables, completing homework assignments, coordinating strategic plans, gathering information and providing advice. The work group will oversee current and future task forces and sub groups created by the Board.

Ms. Williams handed out the Governor's homework assignments. The work group has the responsibility to see that the homework assignments are completed. The task forces that presented the work they had accomplished were dual enrollment/dual credit, school counseling leaders, writing proficiency, and assessment alignment. The task force reports are available on the Governor's website. The work group decided to put the task forces on hold for now.

The K-C work group will compare strategic plans for the Board of Public Education, Board of Regents and State Superintendent. One of the key issues that was brought forth was that the educational industry should be planning and working more together. Keith Kelly, Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry presented information at the December K-C meeting about Bull Mountain and the need for a skilled workforce in Montana. Ms. Williams requested that he present some of this information to the Board of Education.

Commissioner Kelly stated that the Department of Labor and Industry's goal was to make sure we have an adequate workforce. Out of 100 kids that go to school only 25 go on to college. It's the remaining 75 that he wants to focus on. The Governor asked the Workforce Investment Board if Montana has workers in the pipeline. We have natural resources in Montana, but do we have the means to take advantage of that opportunity? The Bull Mountain project is a good example. If it comes on line, will we be ready? We want more Montanans to have a shot at those good paying jobs. They're looking at 6800 people in the construction stage and they need to be skilled construction workers. We have to have them in the pipeline.

The second example is the Alberta pipeline. Mike McNeil from Northwestern Energy stated that they are facing a very serious issue in the near future with the transmission pipeline. Montana has a real shortage of trades to complete this project. Montana applied and received money for the project to line up the needs that are out there for employment and education.

The Department of Labor is focusing on workforce training. There are 32 counties in eastern Montana that are struggling, including Indian nations, tribal colleges, community colleges and colleges of technology. They are working with the apprenticeship programs and workforce centers in that region to find and recruit students and to develop curriculum specific to the trades that will be needed. They have worked with Commissioner Stearn's office on curriculum development. There is a very good opportunity for skilled trades in Montana. With the energy situation Montana can be a major player.

Governor Schweitzer commented that Fort McMurray in Alberta had grown from a town of 2,000 to over 120,000 workers, 80% coming from outside Alberta and over 50% coming from outside North America. They used up their workforce very quickly and have had recruiters all over the world looking for skilled labor.

Mike McNeil addressed the Board regarding employment issues Northwestern Energy is currently facing. Several years ago they realized they were facing an upcoming lack of labor and skilled trades. Their workforce is aging - the average age is 50 with 25 years of service. This situation is typical of other coops and utilities in Montana. Mr. McNeil is currently leading a group of people from industry, labor and state government whose purpose is to do more to encourage people into the line trade. They are trying to put a line college in Butte. In each of the next ten years they will need 40-50 new people in the trade. This does not include some of the work that will be in the pipeline such as new transmission lines. The closest pre-apprenticeship line schools are in North Dakota, South Dakota and Idaho. They need seed money to develop the curriculum and programs so people don't need to leave the state to gain basic skills. Mr. McNeil encouraged the Board of Education to focus some attention on the value two year institutions can provide to the labor shortages we're going to see in skilled trades.

Commissioner Kelly said that we need to get the information to the counselors in the high schools to make them aware of the other options out there.

Governor Schweitzer introduced Adam Young who spoke about Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED). They are working on an innovative way to link education and economic development to fill the education pipeline. They try to identify the high growth sectors in regions and then find the workers to fill those sectors. In Montana bioproducts/bioenergy is the hot growth sector. Montana is part of a four state group looking at the shortage of oil and gas workers. They are developing ways to work with higher education, workforce investment and industry. Industry knows what they are looking for. They can define what they need out of two year and four year programs. Montana needs to get students into the programs and let them know that they can stay in Montana and have a good salary.

Ms. Williams stated that the next step is for the strategic planning group to meet next month and the whole group meeting the end of May.

Regent Semmens commented that Mike McNeill had raised the issue that programs were expensive to develop. He asked if some of the proceeds available from the WIRED grant would be available for program development at 2-year colleges.

Adam replied that there has been an investment. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education received approximately one million dollars in curriculum development funds. Miles Community College, Dawson, Havre and Fort Peck were the four institutions that were funded. Right now they're working on building curriculum for these programs. They are bringing industry into the mix so that industry contributes funds and says what skills they want 2-year graduates to come out of school with.

Regent Hamilton asked if they had the number of apprenticeship enrollees that are either students at tribal colleges or residents on reservations and how many go through apprenticeship training and then go on to the next level. Commissioner Kelly replied that he did not have those figures but would get back to her with the exact number. He also commented that they need to develop some kind of cross training with the apprenticeship programs and the colleges of technology.

Regent Pease suggested that the discussion they had was extremely important in looking at the work of the task forces that had been in existence and looking at strategic plans of those at the table to see where the common ground is. They need to develop a vision in education and connect it to the Department of Labor and the industry movement in Montana. Montana is in a changing environment and needs the ability to bring these strategic plans together. It is essential to have foreseeable outcomes and connect them to the children and people in state.

Steve Meloy commented that it was important to talk about school counselors and their role regarding at-risk kids. The counselling initiative has momentum and they are anxious to work with the K-C work group to achieve what the Governor is aiming for.

The Governor opened the meeting for public comment. There was none.

Governor Schweitzer stated that they wanted people to see what they're attempting to do in the areas where the economy is not growing. The WIRED grant fits the entire energy industry. The strategic plan will include the biotech industry, information technology and construction trades. This plan is a 25 year plan and starts with children at an early age. It won't finish until they're in the work place. Montana has to continue to fill the pipeline with students.

The next agenda item was the Legislative agenda - homework assignments update. Jan Lombardi handed out information regarding Governor Schweitzer's proposed education budget. The intention of the proposed budget was to allow sufficient funds so the homework assignments could be completed. Funding is proposed for full-time kindergarten and start up costs. They have also included a request for funding for curriculum specialists. Other key areas are funding the best and brightest scholarship and technology framework and distance learning. The final item includes resources to do additional work with Indian Education for All and tribal histories.

Superintendent Linda McCulloch reported to the Board that there were over 700 bills introduced so far this session dealing with education. The Superintendent's legislative priorities are:

1. Full-time kindergarten under Senate bill 123 which also includes ten million one time only funds for start up costs.
2. Federal retirement cost correction under Senate bill 56. These retirement costs are currently being taken out of federal funds for the neediest programs such as Title I funding.

3. Indian Education for All increase of funding to schools under House bill 152 and professional development which is in House bill 2 which is a trade off from ready to go grants and closing the achievement gap and lowering the drop-out rate.

4. House bill 152 is the Superintendent's funding bill. This is not in conflict with the Governor's bill. She supported the Governor's bill with some suggestions for changes.

5. Inflationary adjustments were requested.

6. Increase the quality educator component from the 2005 session. This increase was arrived at by using figures passed by both parties during the quality schools interim committee. This component does not raise local property taxes.

7. A one-time-only funding for facilities energy cost relief.

8. Increasing the mileage reimbursement for transportation of students. Currently the school cannot receive reimbursement to pick up students that live within 3 miles of the school. In our urban areas or on large highways it can be dangerous for students to walk.

9. On-going funding for the K-12 data system which was funded two years ago with one-time-only money. OPI has been working with Commissioner Stearn's office so that the K-12 data system and the higher education data system flow together and then to the Department of Labor. The data system cannot go forward without on-going funding.

10. New funding for curriculum specialists at OPI. Montana is the only state in the US which does not have curriculum specialists at the state level. The funding for these positions was eliminated 10-15 years ago.

Superintendent McCulloch addressed the K-12 homework update. The Power Point presentation showed the updated timeline on the high school initiative. OPI has school support teams that are working with the schools most in need. Currently 33 schools are in that program. The support teams go to the schools and work with the staff, community, parents, etc. to formulate ideas to help improve student achievement.

Last fall the State Superintendent had a Call to Greatness Summit targeting those 33 schools most in need of improvement by bringing together principals, superintendents and trustees to discuss goals. Most of those schools are on or near American Indian reservations. Call to Greatness II is scheduled for February 25-26 in Helena. An emphasis will be placed on the School Support Team process.

Part of the funding appropriated to OPI for Indian Education for All was specified for a public education campaign about what Indian Education for All is about. Radio ads ran all through the fall starting on American Indian Heritage Day. The ads have been very well received.

Indian Education Day was held two weeks ago at the Capitol Rotunda. OPI teamed up with Fish, Wildlife and Parks to give lessons to kids. OPI also partnered with the Historical Society for trunks that go out to schools. The University of Montana produced three DVD's that are breathtaking .

Governor Schweitzer called for public comment - there was none.

Steve Meloy reported that the Board of Public Education had been before the Appropriations Committee and that Chairman Wells requested their strategic plans and wanted accountability

for the money appropriated the last session. He reported to the Committee the Board's concern that 109 schools in the state are not meeting basic accreditation requirements. The Board of Public Education supported the Governor's funding bill and intend to support Superintendent McCulloch's bill.

The 2005 session attempted to pass a bill to mandate a policy on bullying which the Board of Public Education felt was under its Constitutional authority. The bill did not make it out of committee and the Board of Public Education now has a rule in place that mandates districts to have a policy on bullying. The Board continues to keep a close eye on bills that attempt to infringe on the Board of Public Education's authority. This session there are several bills that they are watching, one bill which died in committee attempted to allow an interim committee legislative veto of any administrative rule. There are bills to encourage teaching the attributes of marriage, encourage science curriculum on sound scientific principles, requiring 30 minutes of exercise, and alternative teacher certification. These bills by pass the Board of Public Education and go directly to the schools. This is not the work of the legislature.

The distance learning rule was paramount to the Governor's assignment to everyone at the last meeting. With the help of the OPI the Board put this issue on the fast track and today noticed proposed amendments of the distance learning rule for hearing which will be on March 5<sup>th</sup>. This is the result of work of the Distance Learning Task Force which was comprised of members from the education stakeholders. Mr. Meloy handed out copies of Power Point slides which detailed the committee's proposals and resulted in the proposed amendments to the rule. Mr. Meloy advised the Board of Education that the hearing on the proposed amendments would be March 5<sup>th</sup> and that the public would have an opportunity to comment. The Board of Public Education wants the final version of the rule in place in time for the schools to deal with the variance in standards for the next school year.

Storrs Bishop commented that a lot of this work will have an impact on the dual enrollment committee.

Commissioner Stearns presented a report on behalf of the Board of Regents. Commissioner Stearns commented that this was Regent Semmens last meeting with the Board of Education.

Their number one priority was the college affordability plan. They will be presenting that to the Joint Subcommittee on Education tomorrow. She stated that their homework assignment connects the opportunity to advance education through financial aid. This connects with the Legislative agenda through the Best and Brightest Scholarships and the MUS Honors Scholarship Program which is being changed to a mix of merit and need. She encouraged people to testify at the committee hearing on these funding bills.

She stated that they have been working on transferability of credits and student data for years. The heat has been turned up on dual enrollment. Transferability is not just college to college – its high school to college and takes a quality data system to make it work. They have a proposal for one-time-only funding for an information data system to sync up with the OPI student data system and base funding to sustain the effort. She acknowledged its not easy to persuade fiscal conservatives that we need this in the budget.

They are also working on coordinating and enhancing distance learning. This is a high priority for the Board of Regents. Now we need to convince the legislature. We need to make sure that a student at our high school or college or a place bound person that wants to take a distance learning course has the opportunity.

Commissioner Stearns introduced the nationwide campaign – KnowHow2Go which is focused on getting kids ready for college. In middle school 90% know that their kids will go to college, but they feel more scared and less informed as they go through to high school.

On writing proficiency they are working face to face with counselors and English teachers across the state to make sure that students aren't being taught composition in a way that they aren't being prepared. Montana should be proud that we have been competitive in getting Gear Up, Talent Search and other grants that a lot of states didn't get last spring.

Governor Schweitzer opened the meeting for public comment.

Dulce Whitford spoke on behalf of the Montana Indian Education Board of Directors. She stated their appreciation for the Indian Education for All support and funding to close the achievement gap. Ms. Whitford handed out fast facts on tribal governments. She asked for continued support to provide adequate funding to schools and invited everyone to attend the Montana Indian Education Conference held in Bozeman in April.

There was no further public comment.

Governor Schweitzer made closing remarks. He stated that if everyone's homework was done they could answer the questions from the legislature and demonstrate that there is a strategic plan to bring education and economic investment together across Montana.

Patty Myers stated that a couple of Board of Public Education members were not able to attend, Kirk Miller was attending a government relations conference at NASBE and Diane Fladmo resigned last week. The Board of Public Education had a reorganization meeting that morning and elected Patty Myers chair and Angela McLean Vice Chair.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting which was passed.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Linda McCulloch  
Linda McCulloch, State Superintendent  
Secretary to the Montana State Board of Education